

(Mr. ARMEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TRIBUTE TO URBANA HIGH SCHOOL'S CONCERT CHOIR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, the Urbana High School Concert Choir is scheduled to appear in Rome, Italy during this week of March 12 through March 19 as a representative of the State of Illinois in an American Celebration of Music in Italy 1999.

The Urbana High School Concert Choir is under the directorship of Mr. Willie T. Summerville who hails from Crossett, Arkansas, attended the T. W. Daniels High School, Arkansas AM&N College at Pine Bluff, and earned a master's degree in music education from the University of Illinois at Champaign. The choir will sing during the mass on the 16th of March in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. They will sing one selection at the beginning while the priests enter, one selection during the offertory, two selections during communion, and one selection at the end of the mass.

Mr. Summerville and his 40 Urbana High School advanced concert choir members are to be commended and congratulated for being among the best in the world. But all of the Champaign-Urbana community are to be commended for their spirit of generosity and cooperation in contributing the \$70,000 needed for the group to make the trip.

The choir was selected on the basis of recommendations from State music officials, past accomplishments and superior ratings. All of the \$70,000 came from donations, many as tributes to Willie T. Summerville, an outstanding teacher for more than 30 years.

This letter, which I will read, contained the first \$1,000 contribution and says it all.

To Mr. Summerville:

Twenty-nine years ago, in the fall of 1969, I was a student in Mrs. Bryan's sixth grade class at Robeson Elementary School in Champaign, Illinois. In September of that year my father was killed as a result of injuries he sustained in a brutal beating that took place at Par 3 Golf Course. As you can imagine, it was a very difficult time for me. I found few things capable of lifting my spirits back then. Fortunately, the one exception was you, your music class and the time spent in the Robeson Chorus.

I can still remember walking into your music class. You greeted many of us with the silly names that you had made up for us. Music class was always an enjoyable, fun time. We traveled to many countries, many cultures and many people thanks to you and your piano. You taught us about racial equality and racial harmony. I still remember the words to the songs you taught us, like Marching to Pretoria, Walk on By and Good Old Days, to name just a few. On a more personal level, for a boy who had just lost his father, you served as a male mentor

and for the time we were together helped to fill some of the void left behind.

Even outside the classroom, you were an influence in my life. As you may recall, I learned to play trumpet from the band teacher, Phil Garringer, and at his insistence participated in two statewide annual solo music competitions. You were my accompanist for both of those contests, and each time I took home medals. But you were more than an accompanist. You were my coach, my conscience and the driving force behind my success in those contests. You taught me that you play like you practice. You taught me about goals and challenged me to set high standards for performance. You taught me how to work to achieve them. Most of all you taught me to believe in myself at a time when my confidence was shaken. In so many ways, you helped to shape my life and teach me lessons that I still use and practice today. In short, you touched my life.

I am so pleased to learn that you are still shaping and touching young lives. A trip to Rome for your students will no doubt be a life-changing experience for many of them. They will never be the same again for having gone to Italy or for having had you as their teacher. I am thankful that it is finally my turn to help you, and in a very small way repay you for all that you have done for me. I have no doubt that you will succeed in raising the funds you need for the trip. To you and your students, I say learn and enjoy. And thanks again for the memories and lessons on life.

Tim Miller, Vice President, General Counsel, Crane Plastics.

Again I say congratulations to the Urbana High School Concert Choir, to the Champaign-Urbana community, and all of those who made this opportunity possible for 40 outstanding young people to make a trip that they otherwise never would have experienced.

Again I say congratulations to my cousin, Willie Summerville and his wife Valeria, both outstanding teachers, outstanding parents, parents of the year, humanitarians, and I say thanks to you for looking out for the young people from Chicago who come to Champaign-Urbana to attend the University of Illinois. I am certain that Moses and Lenora Summerville are proud of your work and the impact that you have had on the lives of others.

Again, congratulations to you, all of the people of Champaign-Urbana, and certainly to the 40 outstanding young people who will get the opportunity to sing at St. Peter's Basilica.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BILIRAKIS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

INTRODUCTION OF MILITARY FAMILY FOOD STAMP TAX CREDIT BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, approximately 11,000 of our military families are on food stamps. Let me repeat that. Eleven thousand military families are on food stamps. The men and women who volunteer to protect and defend the citizens and freedoms of this Nation are struggling to make ends meet. Our troops accept the most awesome responsibility, yet they are so severely underpaid that many must take on second jobs. Others are forced to accept food stamps in order to feed their families. Still many others out of pride refuse government assistance and their families suffer silently.

Mr. Speaker, I find this absolutely inexcusable. These men and women are willing to defend and die for this Nation and yet our troops are paid so little that thousands can barely afford to feed their own families. Unfortunately, the problems that face our military extend well beyond pay levels. Today's average soldier, sailor, airman and marine is both overworked and undercompensated, and it is not surprising. Defense spending has been cut nearly in half under the current administration. President Clinton will not pay for the increased operational needs of the armed services, but he continues to deploy our forces at a rate greater than any other President in peacetime since World War II. These deployments, which often have no direct bearing on our national security, have cost our Nation over \$13 billion. Frequent deployments are taking their toll on our aging equipment, they are separating our troops from their families, and are quickly wearing out our forces.

I have the honor of representing a district with four military bases, Cherry Point Marine Air Station, Camp Lejeune Marine Base, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and the Elizabeth City Coast Guard Base. I have spent many hours meeting privately off-base with dozens of pilots, commanders and enlisted personnel. They will tell you, Mr. Speaker, the current state of our military is cause for concern. We cannot continue to do more with less, nor can we expect to continue to recruit and retain men and women to an all-volunteer force until we address the issues that affect the quality of life of our troops.

Mr. Speaker, at this point our military has all but hit the bottom of the barrel. Over the last few years, Congress has continued to bring this serious discrepancy between civilian and military pay to the attention of this administration. As a result, the administration has finally started to consider a pay increase to combat the growing problem. This is a good first step, but we need to build upon this momentum.

Today I introduced a bill to curb what I consider one of the most unacceptable situations that faces our military families, and that is that our military families need food stamps. The bill I filed today, the Military Family Food Stamp Tax Credit Bill of 1999,